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## **NIOSH Workplace Safety & Health Topics**

### **Fentanyl: Preventing Occupational Exposure to Law Enforcement**

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recently updated its Emergency Responders web page to provide interim information on fentanyl and its analogs. A summary of this information is provided below.

According to the NIOSH web page, Law enforcement officials are seeing an increase in the use of Illicitly-manufactured fentanyl and its analogs. In addition to being produced illicitly in a powder form, fentanyl or its analogs are also being pressed into counterfeit tablets of commonly misused prescription opioids. These substances are also being found in samples of cocaine, methamphetamine and other non-opioid substances.

Exposure to fentanyl or its analogs via inhalation or skin absorption can be deadly. Carfentanil, a fentanyl analog, can be deadly in the 2 mg range. Another risk to law enforcement and first responders is when naloxone is administered as an antidote, which may result in violent behavior from the patient.

Below is a link to the main page where you will find three additional links to specific information covering: "Protecting Workers At Risk"; "Resources"; and "Illegal Use of Fentanyl"

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/default.html>

The "Protecting Workers At Risk" page includes interim guidance for personal protective equipment, including respirator and glove guidance. It is important to note that this is interim guidance and that every operation is different and will need to be assessed for its unique risks. Due to the nature of fentanyl and its analogs, it may be necessary to vacate the area and call a hazardous materials response team.

A summary of the personal protective equipment recommendations is provided on the next page.

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## **Fentanyl: Preventing Occupational Exposure to Law Enforcement**

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Summary**

When performing tasks that have the potential to aerosolize fentanyl, such as sweeping or “burping” bags to remove air the following PPE is recommended:

#### Coveralls, Boot Covers and Protective Sleeves:

- Should be impermeable, coated and film based
- Fit snugly at ankles, wrists or biceps were appropriate
- Tested and certified to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards

#### Eye Protection:

- Safety goggles/glasses should be worn when not wearing a full facepiece respirator

#### Powder Free Nitrile Gloves:

- While the permeation rate of fentanyl through nitrile gloves is unknown, nitrile is protective against other hazardous drug compounds
- Minimum thickness of 5 mil (0.127 mm)
- Replaced after 30-50 minutes of use or when exiting the processing location
- Double gloving is recommended
  - If sleeve cuffs are worn, they should be placed under the inner glove, while the outer gloves should be worn over the sleeve cuff
  - Outer glove can then be disposed of properly and the inner glove can be used to label evidence
  - Consider using two different color gloves:
    - powder may show up better on a darker color glove
    - two colors can help visualize outer glove holes or tears
- Immediately wash hands with soap and water after properly disposing of gloves

#### Respiratory Protection:

A respiratory protection program which includes medical clearance and fit-testing is required in order to wear any of the respirators recommended below. In addition, facial hair that interferes with the respirator sealing surface or valves is prohibited.

- A NIOSH approved
  - P 100 half-mask filtering facepiece and eye protection, or
  - Half mask-air-purifying respirator with multi-purpose P100 cartridges and eye protection
  - A tight-fitting full facepiece air-purifying respirator with multipurpose P100 cartridges/canister or a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) cartridges/canister
  - A powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters